

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Ten years since defeated uprising,  
Syrian people face war, intervention  
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 85/NO. 14 APRIL 12, 2021

## Workers and our unions need to lead fight for jobs

BY TERRY EVANS

Millions of workers have been forced into long-term joblessness by the crisis of the capitalist rulers and their profit-driven mismanagement of the coronavirus pandemic. At the same time, capitalist investors are plowing trillions of dollars into a frenzy of speculation in stocks, bonds, SPACs, online scams and other financial instruments increasingly divorced from the real economy of production and trade.

Convinced they can reap higher returns by betting on paper values rather than on expanding production, these propertied gamblers have sent stock prices soaring, far beyond their actual value.

Some of them are all too aware of what they're doing, but are driven to continue. "I can make money from buying an overpriced stock," bragged James Mackintosh in the March 25 *Wall Street Journal*, "if I can find someone willing to pay even more."

Continued on page 6

## Mass protests in Myanmar face deadly gov't assaults

BY SETH GALINSKY

Streets were deserted and shopping districts shuttered in large cities, small towns and villages all across Myanmar March 24 during a one day "silent strike," demonstrating the overwhelming opposition to the brutal military junta that seized power Feb. 1.

When street actions by working people and youth resumed the next day, the junta responded with stepped-up violence.

Gen. Min Aung Hlaing told troops and a handful of international guests assembled for the March 27 Armed Forces Day celebration in the capital city of Naypyitaw that the generals are acting to protect the "ethnic people" and "democracy." But the reality is they've crushed the limited democratic rights allowed before the coup and clashed sharply with many of Myanmar's dozens of ethnic peoples.

That same day the regime killed more than 90 people around the country, the highest number of deaths in a single day

Continued on page 9

## Build solidarity with ATI Steelworkers on strike!

Fight attack on their jobs, health care and union



Militant/Ruth Robinett

March 30 picket line in Washington, Pennsylvania, first day of strike against ATI. Steelworkers haven't had a raise since 2014, face boss demands to cut jobs, add more divisive wage tiers.

BY TONY LANE

BRACKENRIDGE, Pa. — Scores of union steelworkers joined picket lines at the Allegheny Technologies Inc. mill here March 30, and at the mill in Washington, as 1,300 United Steelworkers members in five states

"Too many things were left on the table," said Todd Barbiaux, a crane operator and president of United Steelworkers Local 1196 at Brackenridge. Workers haven't had a raise since 2014.

Continued on page 5

## Caravans, rallies worldwide say, 'End the US embargo of Cuba!'



Militant/Alex Huinil

Rally in Albany, New York, March 28, by participants in car caravan against U.S. economic war against Cuba. Similar caravans and rallies took place in 16 U.S. cities and 60 countries.

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Thousands joined car caravans and rallies to protest the U.S. government's economic war against Cuba in at least 16 U.S. cities and 60 countries around the world March 28. In Cuba, hundreds of cyclists and carloads of people took to the Malecón, Havana's well-known seaside drive, chanting, "Down with the blockade!" as they passed by the U.S. Embassy.

For the past six decades, the U.S. rulers have enforced a punishing

economic, financial and commercial embargo of Cuba aimed at starving the Cuban people into submission and overturning their socialist revolution. Millions of working people, led by Fidel Castro and the July 26 Movement, ousted the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959 and established a workers and farmers government.

Washington's efforts to overthrow the revolution have all failed because

Continued on page 4

## SUPPORT FOR STRIKE BATTLES IS CRUCIAL!

— SWP statement page 9

struck against the company's profit-driven concession demands. Most workers that *Militant* correspondents spoke with were veterans of the seven-month ATI lockout in 2015.

## 'Support amnesty for all immigrant workers in the US'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The Joseph Biden administration insists that its attitude toward immigration is more "humane" than that of Donald Trump's before it. But the fact is Biden is trying to shut the U.S. southern border as increasing numbers of migrant workers from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, and especially from Mexico again, are trying to get into the country.

"Biden, please let us in," is the slogan on white T-shirts worn by many camped out in the Mexican border city of Tijuana, some of whom have been there for weeks.

Unlike migrant surges in 2019 and 2014, which were comprised of families from Central America and unaccompanied minors, this one is largely indi-

Continued on page 9

## SWP discusses road forward for workers in New Jersey ballot drive

BY VIVIAN SAHNER

UNION CITY, N.J. — Socialist Workers Party campaign supporters continue to make steady progress toward ballot status for Joanne Kuniansky, the party's candidate for New Jersey governor. By March 29, 914 signatures were collected toward the goal of 1,500. Petitions must be filed with the state by June 8, but the party plans to file well before that.

Continued on page 2

## Inside

Contributions to SWP 'stimulus' appeal at \$77,550 and climbing! 2

Fidel Castro's call to 'fight for free Cuba' at Playa Girón 4

Locked-out Marathon workers win support in fight for safety 7

—On the picket line, p. 3—

Count begins in vote for union at Amazon in Alabama

Montreal longshore workers fight for safety on the job



# SWP discusses road forward

Continued from front page

“Owner-operator truck drivers, we’re on our own,” Arsenio Capellan told SWP campaigners Craig Honts and Terry Evans when they spoke to him at his home in Newark March 28. “So you’re battling with everything against you. It sometimes seems that even the Teamsters don’t care about us.”

Honts pointed to the leadership of the Teamsters in the Midwest during labor battles of the 1930s. “Truck drivers won strikes and built a powerful movement. Their leadership treated owner-operators as fellow workers and reached out to and defended farmers and the unemployed.”

Farmers need the support of workers today, Capellan agreed.

“We need to emulate workers and farmers in Cuba, build an alliance of the exploited classes and fight to establish our own government,” Honts replied.

Capellan was interested in finding out more about the history of labor struggles and got a copy of *In Defense of the US Working Class* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters. He also got *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa* and a

subscription to the *Militant* after signing the petition.

Outside the Walmart store in Se-caucus, Candace Wagner, the SWP’s candidate for lieutenant governor, spoke to Shanice Williams, a 32-year-old postal worker. Williams said that after a couple of years of work she still doesn’t have a permanent position. She’s excluded from some benefits. She receives less family and medical leave for dependent care due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Work can be done safely if workers have control over production and working conditions,” said Wagner. She works on the railroad where bosses are looking for ways to get more out of fewer workers and cut corners on safety to speed up production.

“It’s about time that someone stands up. Amazon gets away with way too much,” said Williams, when Wagner spoke about the need for unions and all workers to support the union-organizing effort at the Amazon center in Bessemer, Alabama. Williams said her cousin works at Amazon and has a second job at a hospital to make ends meet.

Williams signed the petition. She is one of 50 people who have picked up subscriptions to the *Militant* during the first four weeks of petitioning.

An article in the March 25 NY City Lens, an online publication by students at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism, reported on the campaigns of SWP candidates in New York City: Róger Calero for mayor, Willie Cotton for public advocate and Sara Lobman for Manhattan Borough president.

New York state officials lessened



Militant/Róger Calero

**Candace Wagner, SWP candidate for New Jersey lieutenant governor, speaks with Shanice Williams March 28. Williams, a postal worker, signed to put Socialist Workers Party on ballot.**

petition requirements for Democrats and Republicans, claiming the pandemic required it. But the article notes it hiked petitioning requirements for third parties to get on the ballot.

“The rules are aimed to maintain it that way,” Calero told the publication, “to make it seem as if the only two

choices you have are the Democrats and Republicans.”

“The most important thing,” he added, “is an independent working-class party. That’s what we need.”

To join campaign teams in New Jersey or other states, contact the nearest party branch, listed on page 8.

## Contributions to SWP ‘stimulus’ appeal at \$77,550 and climbing!

Contributions to the Socialist Workers Party special “stimulus” appeal, from the \$1,400 U.S. government payments, are rapidly approaching going over the \$100,000 mark — with \$77,550 from 60 contributors around the country.

Add your contribution to the appeal!

“Enclosed is a check from the ‘stimulus’ payment I got from the U.S. government,” writes Chuck Guerra in Miami. “What better use than to stimulate the work of the party.” Barbara Bowman and Norton Sandler write from Los Angeles, “Our pleasure — build the party!”

From Chicago, Naomi Craine and Dean Hazlewood write, “Enclosed are our ‘stimulus’ payment contributions. We’re proud to give it to the party.” From Rachele Fruit in Atlanta: “For the future of land and labor!”

Dennis Drake in Bloomington, Indiana, writes, “Enclosed is my check to advance the fight of the working class.” From Diane Shur in Greensboro, North Carolina: “The outrages of capitalism and the mad campaigns of both capitalist parties have had only one rational response — that of the SWP. Contributing is a real pleasure.”

These contributions are making a tremendous difference toward expanding the ability of the party to bring its program to many thousands of workers and exploited toilers, and join with other fighters in labor and social struggles. To build on a course toward the working class taking political power in the U.S. and to join with toilers worldwide to end social relations based on exploitation — class vs. class — and build a socialist society based on human solidarity.

To contribute, send your check, made out to the Socialist Workers Party, to SWP, 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. The *Militant* will report weekly on the progress of the appeal.

— BRIAN WILLIAMS

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

#### Oakland

**Why Working People Should Oppose Attacks on Asians.** Speaker: Betsey Stone, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., April 9, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

## THE MILITANT

### Support Amazon workers in fight for a union!

*Thousands of Amazon workers in Bessemer, Alabama, are in the midst of a fight to win a union. They’ve received solidarity from working people around the world. The ‘Militant’ champions their struggle against unsafe working conditions, disdain of the bosses.*



Reuters/Lucy Nicholson

AFL-CIO rally in Los Angeles March 22 supports vote for union at Amazon in Alabama.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant’s* views. These are expressed in editorials.

# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

## Montreal longshore workers fight for safety on the job

MONTREAL — By an almost unanimous vote March 21 longshore workers at the Port of Montreal rejected the latest “final” concession contract demands by the Maritime Employers Association. The online strike authorization vote by members of Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 375 was 1,020 to 2, with one abstention. Some 1,125 longshore workers are employed at the port.

A central issue is unsafe work schedules imposed by the bosses, where workers are forced to work 19 days out of 21. Union members going into work March 22 told the *Militant* that this schedule is dangerous and wreaks havoc with their lives.

The vote came at the end of a seven-month truce agreed to by the union and the employers last August, after workers had gone on strike for 12 days over the work schedule, job security and other issues. The strike won widespread support among working people.

The unionists have been without a contract since December 2018. At that time they voted to strike but were blocked when the bosses went to court seeking to deny them this right on the grounds their labor was an “essential service.” After months of hearings that stayed any strike action, the court rejected the bosses’ motion.

The union has called on the Maritime Employers Association to resume negotiations. Its strike mandate expires April 15.

The bosses have launched a campaign in the media against the union and the workers. “The cost to the economy at this point when we are still being so badly affected by COVID would simply be too great,” Canadian Chamber of Commerce President Perrin Beatty told the media. Ships are being rerouted to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

“Ottawa Ready to Force a Return to Work” headlined a March 23 article in the Montreal daily *La Presse*. The paper claimed the federal government was discussing imposing a back-to-work order if there is a strike.

— Joe Young

## Steelworkers in Farrell, Pennsylvania, end strike

Over 400 members of United Steelworkers Local 1016-3, who had been on strike for six months against NLMK Steel in Farrell, Pennsylvania, voted up a four-year contract March 1. At the center of the strike was workers’ efforts to keep the health care package the majority of workers preferred and not be forced onto a high-deductible scheme the bosses pushed.

Todd Clary, a United Steelworkers staff representative, told the *Sharon Herald* that all current members of the union would have what they had before. New hires would be limited to the high-deductible scheme for the first two years, but being able to get the better insurance plan.

Support locally for the strike was very evident during every trip I made to the picket line. There were lots of honks from workers in cars and trucks driving by the picket line in front of the main plant gate. Solidarity and contributions came in from other Steelworkers lo-



Militant/Kaitlin Estill

Teamsters Local 89 members, on strike against DSI Tunneling for a contract since last August, picket in Louisville, Kentucky, March 19. The steel-fabrication workers joined the union in 2019. “They hired temporary workers and hoped we’d go away. But we’re still here, getting support from other workers,” Knox Harris, center, told SWP member Jacquie Henderson, right.

cals, and United Electrical Workers and IUE-CWA locals across western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio.

Local 1016-3 President Jimmy Wells thanked the community for their support. “It meant that much

to us, and I want to make sure that the community understands that we won’t forget. We don’t forget how much they supported us. We will support them, too,” he said.

— Tony Lane

## Count begins in vote for a union at Amazon in Alabama

BY SUSAN LAMONT

ATLANTA — “I feel like everybody is watching us and we’re really making a difference and making a change when it comes to everybody sticking together and standing together,” Darryl Richardson, an outspoken supporter of the fight to win union recognition for the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union at Amazon’s giant fulfillment center in Bessemer, Alabama, said on National Public Radio March 28.

Richardson was the first worker at the Bessemer facility to contact the RWDSU last year after the warehouse opened. He was soon joined by others who agreed that they needed to come together and get organized as a union, to fight to defend themselves from boss harassment and for higher wages and more humane working conditions. Like some other workers at Amazon, Richardson had years of experience as an active union member

before getting hired at Amazon.

Over the fall, hundreds of the nearly 6,000 workers signed union-recognition cards, forcing the National Labor Relations Board to authorize a union election. Conducted by the NLRB, the mail-in vote ended March 29 in one of the largest U.S. union elections in decades.

Amazon is among the biggest U.S. employers and its profits and workforce have mushroomed during the COVID pandemic. Owner Jeff Bezos is one of the richest men in the world. The company has been on a concerted anti-union drive aimed at intimidating workers into voting “no.” They’ve forced workers to attend special anti-union meetings, posted “vote no” flyers in bathroom stalls and brought in managers from other warehouses to stop workers in the hallway to tell them how to vote.

“When I talk to employees who don’t understand about the union,” Richardson told NPR, “I say any company that

fights so hard to keep [the union] out, it’s got to be benefiting us.”

The organizing effort is being closely watched by workers around the country as it has received extensive media coverage. Solidarity has been building during the last weeks of the union vote. Young people from around the country came into the RWDSU’s Birmingham office, volunteering to help with the union’s final push to win the largest “yes” vote possible.

The outcome of the election likely won’t be known right away. Both the RWDSU and Amazon will observe the ballot count and have seven days to file objections to any ballot. Reuters reported that at least 19 people received ballots and communications from Amazon urging them to vote, and vote “no,” even though they no longer work there.

Then the NLRB will review any appeal, and its decisions can also be appealed.

### Support for organizing union grows

The RWDSU has received hundreds of inquiries from Amazon workers around the country wanting to learn more about how they can organize to get a union where they work.

“Conditions at Amazon, Walmart and many other companies, where workers face harsh, dangerous and degrading conditions and don’t make high enough wages to support their families, make it inevitable further organizing drives like the one in Bessemer will arise,” Sam Manuel, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Atlanta City Council president, told the *Militant*. Manuel and running mate Rachele Fruit, SWP candidate for Atlanta mayor, have been using their campaigns to win solidarity for the RWDSU union drive. Both have visited Bessemer to speak with Amazon workers and others in the area to express their support and to be better able to win support from others.

“Fights like the one in Bessemer help workers gain confidence in their own strength when they come together and draw the lessons needed to rebuild a class-struggle labor movement that can chart a road forward for working people,” said Manuel.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 15, 1996

LOS ANGELES — The videotaped clubbing of several Mexican workers by police here April 1, shown on television throughout the United States and Mexico, has caused widespread indignation.

The next day, 100 protesters outside the Federal Building chanted, “We want justice.” Some 150 people rallied April 3 demanding prosecution of the cops.

The incident began when Border Patrol cops began to pursue a pickup truck carrying 19 immigrant workers near a police checkpoint on an interstate highway. The pickup stopped on the side of the freeway, where some of the workers tried to flee. The videotape shows three cops clubbing, kicking, and arresting three workers who offer no resistance.

In response to the public outcry, officials put two of the cops on paid administrative leave. The FBI opened a civil rights investigation of the assault.



April 16, 1971

On March 31, First Lt. William Calley was sentenced to a life term at hard labor for the premeditated murder of at least 22 South Vietnamese civilians in 1968.

Millions believe that Calley is a scapegoat for officers and government officials higher up the chain of command who bear even greater responsibility. Masses of Americans are beginning to believe their leaders may be guilty of wholesale slaughter.

The verdict has raised questions about the role of the U.S. in World War II and the Korean War. The deep questioning taking place is producing a new stage of opposition to the war. It presents an opportunity to explain that the biggest crime of all is the Vietnam war itself.

The best answer to the criminal policies of the Nixon administration is a massive turnout April 24 in San Francisco and Washington, demanding that all U.S. forces be withdrawn immediately.



April 13, 1946

ATHENS, Greece — Greece continues to be agitated by open civil war and revolutionary ferment. The defeat of the revolutionary movement of December 1944 provoked the counter-revolutionary terror. In spite of the military and financial support of British imperialism, the capitalists have not been able to improve the chaotic situation in the country, nor establish any political stability.

A new wave of strikes, political in character, are at present sweeping the country. The workers are everywhere demanding the postponement of the elections and an end to reactionary terror.

The Greek Trotskyists participated in the strike committees of numerous unions and factories. Party life within the labor movement is now more intense than ever. The effectiveness of Trotskyist work is evidenced by the fact that the Stalinists direct increasingly bitter tirades against the movement.



# Caravans, rallies worldwide say, 'End US embargo of Cuba!'

**Continued from front page** of the determination of Cuban workers and farmers to defend their revolution. But every successive U.S. administration has continued to enforce the embargo.

On March 9, the White House declared, "A Cuba policy shift is not currently among President Biden's top priorities." Two weeks earlier, Biden renewed Washington's 1996 declaration of a "national emergency with respect to Cuba," authorizing U.S. forces to seize ships in U.S. waters that visit Cuba without Washington's permission.

Many of the March 28 actions were initiated by Cuban-born immigrants, others were sponsored by Cuba solidarity committees and other groups.

Washington "needs to leave Guantánamo Bay. It's our territory," Carelia Drake, a Cuban doctor who now lives in Chicago, told protesters gathered there. She was referring to the Cuban territory occupied by the U.S. military in violation of Cuba's sovereignty, where Washington maintains a notorious prison.

Below are a few of the reports the *Militant* received from the international day of action. Special events are planned in April to mark the 60th anniversary of

the defeat of the U.S.-backed mercenary assault at Playa Girón.

## NEW YORK CITY

Some 45 people in more than a dozen cars joined the caravan here. It wound through Harlem, getting a friendly response from onlookers and ended in El Barrio with a picket and rally.

The action included about a dozen Cuban Americans, several participating for the first time. They had learned about it from Cubans in other U.S. and Canadian cities where similar caravans had taken place.

Rev. Dorlimar Lebrón Malavé, the pastor at the First Spanish United Methodist Church just across the street from the rally, welcomed participants to the neighborhood, which historically is a center of the Puerto Rican community. It now includes many Mexicans, West Africans and African Americans. She read a special message from Pedro Luis Pedrosó, Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations.

"Your just demand for the lifting of the criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade, which for 60 years has stymied the full development of the Cuban people and violated their



Granma/Ariel Cecilio Lemus

Above, as part of international day of protest against Washington's embargo against Cuba, motorcyclists ride along Havana's famous Malecón esplanade March 28. They, and others in cars and on bicycles, chanted, "Down with the blockade!" as they passed the U.S. Embassy.

most basic rights, resounds outside the States," Pedrosó wrote.

"On behalf of the people of Cuba I can tell you that we will not surrender," he wrote, "because there are friends like you, who encourage us in all circumstances."

Jaime Mendieta, from Casa de las Américas, a Cuban American group in New York, noted that the U.S. economic war is causing hardships for the people of Cuba. "There is no limit to what the U.S. government will do," Mendieta said, in its attempts to overturn the Cuban Revolution.

Fidel Gómez, one of the Cuban-born participants, told the crowd, "This is my first protest here since I moved to the U.S. from Canada. It won't be my last. The embargo has to be ended." He and several others came from New Jersey.

"Every U.S. administration from Eisenhower to Biden has had the same goal of destroying Cuba's socialist revolution," Sara Lobman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Manhattan Borough president, told the rally. She said the monthly caravans were growing and were a way to reach working people and win them to the fight to lift the U.S. embargo.

— Seth Galinsky

## MIAMI

A caravan of over 100 cars and bicycles with signs opposing the U.S. embargo against Cuba made its way through Coral Gables and the "Little Havana" area of Miami. Many onlookers showed approval by giving a thumbs-up with motorists honking their horns. A few passersby showed hostility but there were no attempts to disrupt the caravan.

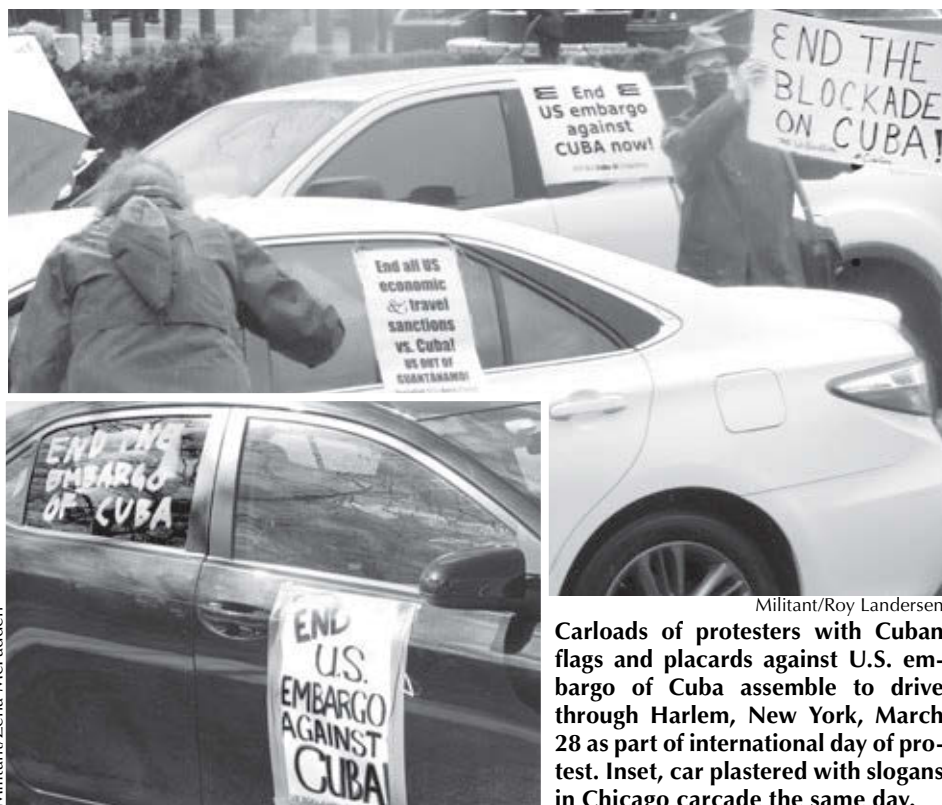
"Me and my family are one of the results of the blockade," Alina Velazquez told participants. "We are here in the U.S. not because we are against the government of Cuba but out of economic necessity. The blockade is inhumane and unjust."

— Chuck Guerra and Nelson González

## WASHINGTON, DC

"It's fitting to gather at the African American Civil War Museum," Thomas Blanton, a museum volunteer, told participants at a rally after the D.C. caravan. "Cuban soldiers were among the members of the United States Colored Troops who fought to end slavery. We have a debt to them."

Over 25 people in 13 cars joined a



Militant/Roy Landersen

Carloads of protesters with Cuban flags and placards against U.S. embargo of Cuba assemble to drive through Harlem, New York, March 28 as part of international day of protest. Inset, car plastered with slogans in Chicago carcade the same day.

## Fidel Castro's call to 'fight for free Cuba' at Playa Girón

On April 17-19, 1961, U.S. imperialism suffered what Fidel Castro called its "first great defeat in the Americas" at the hands of the workers and peasants of Cuba. Millions were mobilized arms in hand to defend their newly proclaimed socialist revolution against a mercenary invasion at Playa Girón organized by Washington.

It was meant to pave the way for a full-scale invasion by U.S. forces to crush the revolution begun two years before with the popular triumph, led by Castro and the July 26 Movement, over the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

In less than 72 hours the invaders were completely defeated. Below is an excerpt from Castro's April 17 battle orders to the people of Cuba as Washington's attack began.

Opponents of the U.S. rulers' ongoing economic and political assaults against Cuba's people and their revolution are organizing activities in April to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the victory at Playa Girón.

For information in your area, visit the National Network on Cuba website, <http://nnoc.info>.



The people are already mobilizing to carry out the slogans of defending the homeland and maintaining production.

Forward, Cubans! Let us answer with fire and sword the barbarians who scorn us and seek to return us to slavery. They come to take away the land that the revolution gave to the peasants and cooperativists; we fight to defend the land of the peasant and the cooperativist. They come to take away the people's factories, the people's sugar mills, the people's mines; we fight to defend our factories, our sugar mills, our mines. They come to take away from our children and from our peasant women the schools that the revolution has opened for them everywhere; we defend the schools of our children and of the peasantry. They come to take away from black men and women the dignity that the revolution has re-

turned to them; we fight to maintain the supreme dignity of each and every human being. They come to take away from workers their new jobs; we fight for a free Cuba with jobs for every working man and woman. They come to destroy the homeland, while we defend the homeland.

Forward, Cubans! Everyone to their posts of combat and work!

Forward, Cubans! The revolution is invincible, and against it and the heroic people that defend it, all enemies will be shattered!

Let us cry out, with more ardor and firmness than ever, at a time when Cubans are already laying down their lives in battle:

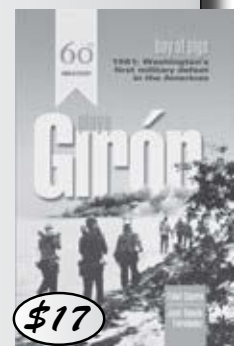
*Viva Cuba libre!  
Patria o muerte!  
Venceremos!*

Fidel Castro Ruz  
Commander in Chief  
and Prime Minister of the  
Revolutionary Government

### 60th anniversary edition Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs

by Fidel Castro

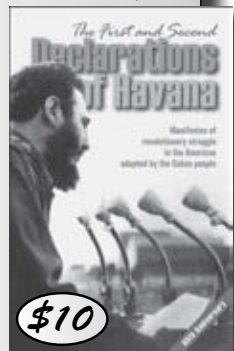
In 72 hours of combat in April 1961, Cuba's revolutionary armed forces defeated a U.S.-organized invasion, setting an example of how to withstand enormous might — and win.



\$17

### The First and Second Declarations of Havana

Nowhere are questions of revolutionary strategy in the Americas addressed with greater truthfulness and clarity than in the First and Second Declarations of Havana, adopted by million-strong assemblies of the Cuban people in 1960 and 1962.



\$10

**pathfinderpress.com**





Militant/Chuck Guerra

Some of the participants from March 28 caravan protest in Miami rally at the end of a drive through Coral Gables and the “Little Havana” area of the city. Placard at right says, “Homeland and life! Down with the blockade! Long live Cuba.” Action was fourth straight monthly protest.

spirited action organized by the D.C. Metro Coalition in Solidarity with the Cuban Revolution.

—Arlene Rubinstein

### CANADA

MONTREAL — Caravans against the U.S. embargo of Cuba took place here as well as Toronto and Ottawa, Ontario; Calgary, Alberta; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia.

In Montreal, a caravan with more than 30 cars and over 60 people wound its way downtown, passing by the U.S. Consulate.

Chrislène Charles, who works at a Cargill meatpacking plant, was attending her first protest. “I am here because of what the Cuban doctors have done in Haiti,” she said. Thousands of Cuban medical volunteers have served there since the devastation of Hurricane Georges in 1998, responding to repeated outbreaks of cholera and helping to build a nationwide health system.

—Joe Young

### EUROPE

LONDON — A cycle-cade protest here was organized by Miriam Palacios, a representative of Cubans resident in the U.K. “We’re supporting the ‘bridges of love’ being promoted by Cubans in North America,” she said. The action was broadcast on Cuban TV. Other actions took place in Sheffield, organized by the local Cuba



Militant photos: above, Carole Lesnick; below, Glova Scott

Above, cars with signs calling for an end to U.S. embargo of Cuba in San Francisco, March 28. Below, protesters in Washington, D.C., demand White House end ban on travel to Cuba.

Solidarity Campaign, and in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Across Europe, on the initiative of Cubans living in various countries, people took to the streets in cavalcades, cycle rides and rallies.

“Hundreds of people in towns across Spain mobilized against the criminal blockade,” including in over a dozen municipalities throughout Catalonia, Gustavo de la Torre told the *Militant* by

phone from Barcelona. De la Torre is president of the José Martí Federation of Associations of Cubans Resident in Spain, the country with the largest concentration of Cuban immigrants in Europe.

Similar demonstrations were held in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Russia, Serbia, Sweden and elsewhere.

—Jonathan Silberman

## Build solidarity with ATI Steelworkers on strike!

### Continued from front page

Barbiaux and others on the picket lines explained the company seeks to take away overtime rates after eight hours and that most workers at the Brackenridge mill work 12-hour shifts.

Another issue is health care. “This is a specialty steel plant. Work conditions are tough, because part of the picture are the cancer-causing particles in the air,” Brad Phillips, who has worked at ATI’s mill in Washington for 14 years, told the *Militant* on the picket line there. “There’s no

cost-of-living allowance. The salaried workers get their bonuses and raises, but not us.”

Contracting out union work is also a key issue. “The company lays maintenance people off and still brings contractors in. It’s a direct attack on the bargaining unit,” Lance Jablonski, a maintenance worker who has 20 years in Brackenridge, said.

Jablonski pointed to how the company is trying “to divide us up” by having workers on different tiers in terms of wages, retirement and health care plans. The latest proposal, he said, “would break it down to three tiers.”

“The biggest issue is health care,” said Dave Varsho, a garage worker and unit chair of USW Local 7139-05, in Washington. “They want to separate the union into different health care programs and make us pay more and more,” he said. “They want to eventually eliminate health care from the bargaining agreement.”

In the bosses’ proposed concession contract workers will have to start paying health care premiums for the first time.

A number of workers told us how the company tries to divide workers up. “They want to deepen the tier system,” said John Hickman, a shipping worker in Washington with 33 years in the mill. “They bring in new hires at 80% of the pay we get and at the same time raise their health care costs. People can’t work at those wages and pay hundreds and perhaps a thousand dollars a month for health care.”

The bosses have been cutting the union workforce and closing down mills they don’t consider profitable enough. They’re shifting production out of stainless steel, which they claim doesn’t make enough money, and expanding new nonunion facilities in North Carolina that make specialty metals for aero-

space and defense industries.

There are workers laid off at both the Washington and Brackenridge mills. Jim Allenberg, a maintenance worker, told the *Militant* he took a job at Brackenridge in 2018 because he thought it was secure. “Now I have no job, I’m out on the street,” after the company idled the finishing mill there, Allenberg said.

Bud Olsen, a crane operator at Brackenridge, said the company “wants to eliminate jobs and bring in contract people to do union jobs, do all the maintenance and repair work.” He said the wage raises in the proposed contract were contingent on accepting these job cuts. “There’s a lot of families that would effect.”

Ron Stein, a maintenance worker who has 33 years in the Washington plant, told a similar story. “In 2007 there were 250 workers here. Now there are 180, but 20 of those guys are laid off.”

While *Militant* worker-correspondents were at the Washington picket line, a retired United Mine Workers member joined the picket with a big UMW flag, saying, “I have come to bring you brothers some solidarity.” A discussion followed about mine and mill closings and fights both he and the Steelworkers had seen.

The ATI lockout six years ago was a bitter battle. The Steelworkers need solidarity and support.

Organize to get the word out about the strike, join the picket line and build solidarity in your union and community. You can contact USW Local 1196 at 1080 Brackenridge Ave., Brackenridge, PA 15014, and at unionhall1196@gmail.com

USW Local 7139 is at 1505 Jefferson Ave., Washington, PA 15301.

Malcolm Jarrett and Ruth Robinett contributed to this article.

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# Workers and our unions need to take the lead in fight for jobs

Continued from front page

But “the danger is that we run out of greater fools,” he warned nervously. At some point, the bottom will fall out and the market will plummet.

For the working class some 9.5 million more workers remain out of work than a year ago. The government, which undercounts the real figures, says 18.2 million workers are getting unemployment benefits today.

The media heralded the drop of new unemployment claims to a year’s low of 684,000 for the week ending March 20. But this figure excludes both self-employed workers, who claim benefits under different pandemic relief programs, and workers who have given up looking for a job altogether. More than 4 million workers have been dropped from the workforce since February 2020.

Ford announced it was cutting the number of shifts at its truck plant in Louisville, Kentucky, and shutting down production at its Avon Lake, Ohio, assembly plant, blaming it on a shortage of parts. Laid-off workers get 75% of their wages, but the growing number of workers hired on temporary contracts are left to fend for themselves.

In their drive to cut costs to boost profits, the bosses in recent years have turned to just-in-time inventory operations. But this leaves them vulnerable to any disruption in global supply chains. This was exacerbated by the closure of the Suez Canal last week after a mammoth container ship ran aground. The Ever Given blocked the canal, which is used by 13% of world-wide maritime trade. Bosses say production will be affected, even after the boat was refloated March 29.

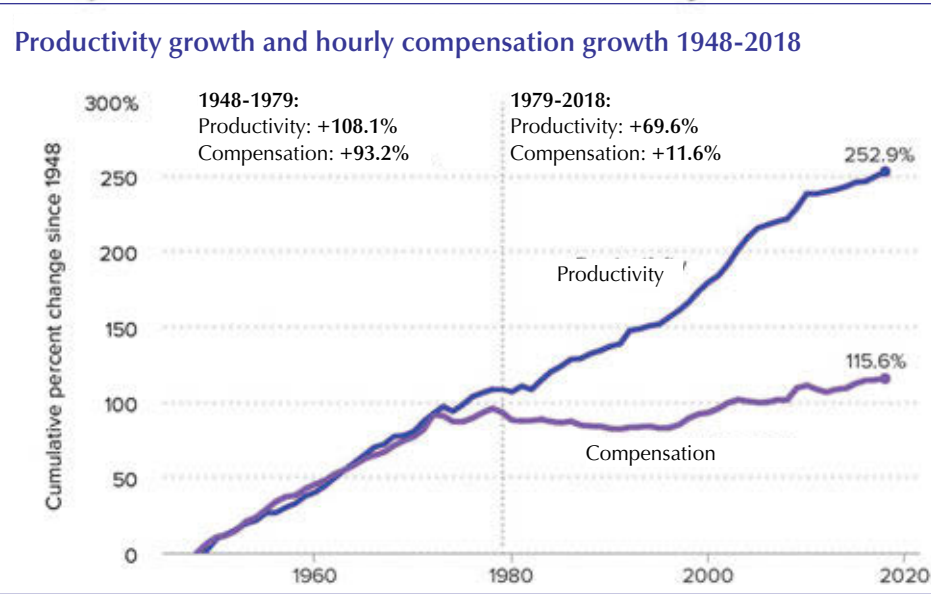
Hiring should pick up as more workers get access to vaccination and the bosses see prospects to profit by putting more of us to work. Both of these things will be good for working people. Every worker should seek to fight their way through the infuriating maze of capitalist disorganization to get the shot. Back on the job, workers will feel increasingly confident in joining together to stand up to bosses’ attacks on wages and conditions and fight for what we need.

### Capitalists’ speculative binge

While offering welfare-type one-time handouts, the Joseph Biden administration has done nothing to reverse long-term unemployment. And capitalist coupon clippers have turned increasingly to gambling.



Workers hold sign in front of Amazon fulfillment center in Bessemer, Alabama, March 5, supporting union organizing drive by Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.



Gap between the productivity squeezed out of workers and their pay has increased dramatically since 1979, as speedup led to a nearly 70% increase in workers’ productivity, while wages rose only 11.6%. Bosses are pushing even harder under crisis conditions unfolding today.

To stay afloat and refinance rising debts, company owners issued a record \$140 billion in junk bonds over the last three months, enticing investors to buy higher yielding but riskier forms of debt. This includes those gambling with pension funds that hold workers’ futures.

The current giddy surge in stock prices is nothing new. Driven by the need to compete with rivals or go under, the ruling capitalist families act pragmatically. Their current frenzy of spending on all types of financial paper is simply an effort to maximize their profits regardless of the consequences for the capitalist economy or for working people.

“The exploiters are sinking their capital into ‘labor saving’ retooling and speculative paper claims on values because they can get a better rate of return there than from investments in building new factories, installing major new technologies, and hiring on large amounts of additional labor power,” explains the Socialist Workers Party’s resolution “What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold.” It can be found in *New International* no. 10.

This has remained true despite successive governments — Democrat and Republican alike — holding down the cost of borrowing by keeping interest rates near or at zero.

No better example of speculative mania exists than the soaring prices of so-called cryptocurrencies. Bitcoin has surged in value some 990% in the past year.

These digital tokens were hyped by their meritocratic designers as a trans-

national alternative to paper currencies, which are ultimately based on the country’s productive capacity. But bitcoins aren’t based on anything in the real world, and remain largely an object of speculation. Unlike the dollar or any other country’s currency, the economic and military might of a capitalist class does not stand behind digital currencies.

That hasn’t stopped central banks from trying to get in on the speculative boom. Federal Reserve Chairman Jay Powell says Fed officials are considering whether they can issue a dollar-based digital currency.

Alongside persistent unemployment, workers face an assault on another front — rising prices of basic necessities that

make up a large chunk of our regular expenses. Food prices rose 3.9% last year. The Department of Agriculture predicts they’ll rise at least another 3% this year.

Rival capitalist rulers worldwide, fearing they’ll lose ground in cutthroat competition, are printing money like crazy, hoping to goose up production, purchases and profits. “Inflation has not come back,” the *Financial Times* pontificates. “It may never do so.” This flies in the face of history.

For millions of workers facing job cuts, furloughs and attacks on their wages, real inflation in basic necessities we need today wreaks havoc in our lives.

“For workers and farmers and other exploited producers there is no way to prevent rising prices,” Malcolm Jarrett, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Pittsburgh mayor, told the *Militant*. “But on the job we do have the power to stand together and fight for cost-of-living clauses in every union contract that raise pay and retirement benefits every time prices go up.

“The SWP calls for our unions to fight for a government-funded public works program to create millions of jobs at union-scale wages to build hospitals, schools, child care centers and other things working people need,” he said.

“My party campaigns to organize working people to support each others’ struggles,” Jarrett said. “This is how we can pave the way for building the fighting labor movement we need and lead millions of the exploited to fight to take political power into our own hands.”

## Ten years since uprising, Syrian people face war, intervention

BY ROY LANDERSEN

For a decade now, working people in Syria have faced a social catastrophe since President Bashar al-Assad’s regime moved to crush a popular uprising for political rights in 2011. As civil war began, Washington and the rulers of Iran, Russia and Turkey intervened, each pursuing its own economic and political interests.

Over half a million have been killed. More than half the prewar population of 23 million were forced to flee from their homes. Many have been driven into camps in the northwest province of Idlib on the Turkish border, the last stronghold of organized forces opposed to the Syrian government.

Over 5 million are refugees in nearby countries. Bombed-out cities retaken by Assad’s forces are now wracked by severe shortages of bread and power.

Hundreds of thousands of working people courageously took to the streets against Assad in March 2011, drawing inspiration from struggles against hated dictatorial regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in the region.

But the working class, lacking a leadership capable of organizing an independent fight to take political power into its own hands, was pushed aside by capitalist forces, which formed armed groups to combat the regime. These ranged from former figures in Assad’s military to Islamists of different stripes.

Assad’s Baathist Socialist Party had postured for decades as a defender of the Arab peoples against Washington and other imperialist powers. In fact, it led a tyrannical government dominat-

ed by a layer of ruling families largely drawn from Syria’s Alawite Muslim minority who defended capitalist interests against working people. The Communist Party of Syria subordinated the struggles of workers and farmers to Moscow’s interests, collaborating closely with the Baathists.

As the fighting unfolded, part of Syria’s Kurdish population of 1.7 million moved to take control over the northeastern region of the country, where the majority of Kurds live. The over 30 million Kurds, divided between Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq, are the largest nationality worldwide without their own homeland.

Today, Assad’s forces, with decisive aid from Moscow’s air power and Iranian-backed militias on the ground, have regained control of two-thirds of Syria, much of it devastated.

### U.S. military intervention

The administration of Joseph Biden, like previous administrations, is acting to defend the U.S. rulers’ interests in a region holding key oil reserves, trading links and military bases.

U.S. airstrikes in Syria Feb. 25 killed 22 Tehran-backed militiamen after a missile attack on a U.S. base in Iraq that Washington blames on Tehran.

When the Syrian civil war began, Washington voiced tepid support for some of the groups fighting Assad, but did not intervene directly. When reactionary Islamic State seized parts of Syria, the U.S. rulers unleashed airstrikes. Washington largely relied on the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) to

# Locked out Marathon workers win support in fight for safety

BY GABBY PROSSER

ST. PAUL PARK, Minn. — Some 200 oil refinery workers here, members of Teamsters Local 120, are now in their 10th week fighting a lockout by the bosses at Marathon Petroleum, the largest oil refining company in the U.S. They are receiving growing solidarity from many unions and other workers in the area and across the country.

Local 722 President Steve Frisque and other members of United Auto Workers Local 722 came from Hudson, Wisconsin, March 28 to join their picket line, show support and share experiences from their national strike against General Motors in 2019. Frisque explained why they had come, and later sent a formal statement on behalf of the union. (See solidarity message below photo.)

The central issue in the refinery workers’ fight is company demands to replace union members with non-union contract workers. This would make workers inside the refinery less safe, as well as those who live in the area.

Dozens of Marathon workers’ family and friends came out March 11 and joined the picket line to show widespread community support.

“I stand behind him 1,000%,” Megan Christner told the *St. Paul Union Advocate*, talking about her husband, Jason, an operator in the refinery. “I

told him do not back down. You’ve got to stand up for what you believe.”

The locked-out Teamsters are among a number of unions fighting boss attacks on their right to a union, a job, and on their wages and working conditions.

This includes 1,300 Steelworkers at ATI’s nine mills in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and Connecticut; Teamsters Local 89 members on strike for a contract at DSI in Louisville, Kentucky; nurses at St. Vincent hospital in Worcester, Massachusetts; and some 5,800 warehouse workers seeking union representation against a ferocious anti-union campaign by Amazon in Bessemer, Alabama.

When Local 722 went on strike, Frisque said, they received solidarity from the Teamsters and many other unions. “They had our backs when we needed them,” he wrote. “We will have theirs whenever and wherever they need us.”

The visiting UAW members and Teamsters both said they had been amazed at the amount of solidarity they got, noting it really gave them a boost. One woman from the area, Local 120 members said, comes out every night at 8 p.m. and serves dinner to pickets seven nights a week.

A group of members of Teamsters Local 320 from St. Louis County, which includes Duluth, came down to show support March 27. And members of United Steelworkers Local 662, who work at the large Flint Hills Resources refinery in Rosemount, came over as well.

The Teamsters have their picket line up 24/7 and welcome all who want to help.

Send messages of support and contributions to Teamsters Local 120, 9422 Ulysses St. NE, Suite 120, Blaine, MN 55434.

‘You pick a fight with one of us, you pick a fight with all of us’



United Auto Workers Local 722 members from Hudson, Wisconsin, join locked-out Marathon refinery workers’ picket line March 28 in St. Paul Park, Minnesota. Steve Frisque, third from right, president of Local 722, sent solidarity message below.

UAW Local 722 fully supports our Union Brothers and Sisters from Teamsters Local 120 who are out on strike at the Marathon Refinery facility in Saint Paul Park, Minnesota. Once again, we are seeing a company sacrifice the health and safety of their workers and also the health and safety of families in the surrounding community for the sake of higher profit margins. ...

In 2019 the UAW called a national strike against General Motors. Our local, UAW Local 722, is a small local of 115 people located in Hudson, Wis., and only a handful of our membership had ever been out on strike before. It was a scary time for many of our members. ...

What got us through and what boosted our morale was the overwhelming support we received from our Union Brothers and Sisters from our neighboring labor unions. ... Every day they showed up to walk the picket line with us. They brought gift cards for gas and groceries, they brought food and water, diapers for our members’ children. They had our back when we needed them and for that we will be forever grateful.

When people ask me why do you go over and spend your Saturday or Sunday afternoon walking the picket line of people you don’t know against a company that you don’t work for? My answer to them is simple. I do know them. They are my Union Brothers and Sisters. They had our backs when we needed them. We will have theirs whenever and wherever they need us. You pick a fight with one of us, YOU PICK A FIGHT WITH ALL OF US!

In Solidarity,

— STEVE FRISQUE, PRESIDENT, UAW LOCAL 722

### ‘Safety is in the hands of these fighters’

Below is a letter the *Militant* received from Jeri Mullan about the Marathon workers fight in St. Paul Park.

I have been following with special interest the *Militant* coverage of the Marathon oil workers’ fight in St. Paul Park. For years I worked in a small school there.

In St. Paul Park, all year round, the refinery sets off its sirens once a month to check the warning system for explosions in the refinery. In this town with a little over 5,000 people, an explosion at the Marathon oil refinery that sits at the end of the main street in town, would leave nothing standing.

You can count the line of rail tankers running parallel to the refinery coming in. The peril of explosion lies in all the materials that are shipped by rail into and out of the refinery along with the dangers of production in the refinery itself.

The Canadian Pacific rail line that carries those materials passes through my neighborhood. In the Twin Cities we are surrounded by a rail grid running trains that sometimes haul one hundred or more tankers. I live in an area that has been marked off by the city in zones that take into account the possibility of a derailment. The city has a plan in case of a derailment that sets off an explosion — it’s a cleanup plan. Hazmat will come in after the event is over.

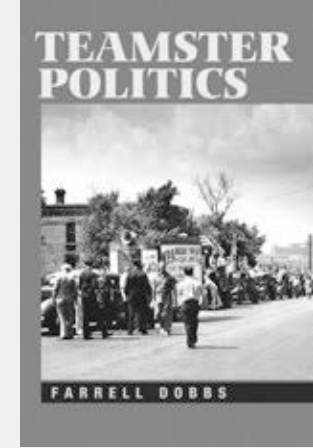
No promises to deal with safety issues that would prevent a rail disaster.

No promises to set an evacuation plan in place. You’re on your own for that.

Two hundred oil refinery workers at the Marathon refinery stand against risk of disaster that puts an entire town at risk. A fight that is understood by union support among nurses, teachers, truck drivers, rail workers, letter carriers, Metro transit workers, to name just some of those who send their support to St. Paul Park. Safety is in the hands of these fighters.

— JERI MULLAN, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

### Recommended reading



“Unionism and politics cannot be separated. Power generated at the trade-union level can be shattered by government blows. Workers must enter the political arena as an independent class force, with their own party.”

— Farrell Dobbs

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# Chinese Cubans: Indispensable strand of Cuba's revolution

Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution by Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui and Moisés Sío Wong, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for April. It covers how these three rebels of Chinese Cuban ancestry rose to be generals in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. And it shows how the brutal exploitation faced by Chinese Cubans under capitalist rule in Cuba led to their "unblemished record of combat" in a century of revolutionary struggles that culminated in the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Batista regime in 1959. It ranges from the history of Chinese immigration to the experiences of the three in internationalist revolutionary action over decades. These interviews from 2002 to 2005 were by Mary-Alice Waters, who edited the book, and other Socialist Workers Party members. The excerpt is from Waters' introduction. Copyright © 2005 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, three young rebels of Chinese Cuban ancestry, became combatants in the clandestine struggle and 1956-58 revolutionary war that brought down the US-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and opened



Bohemia  
"Resident Chinese support the Cuban Revolution and its leader, Fidel Castro!" is banner of Chinese New Democracy Alliance as they join a million people in Havana, Sept. 2, 1960. Rally approved Declaration of Havana, affirming duty of oppressed peoples to fight for liberation.

the door to socialist revolution in the Americas. Each, in the course of a lifetime of revolutionary action, became a general in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba. Through their stories the economic, social, and political forces that gave birth to the Cuban nation and still shape our epoch unfold.

We see how millions of ordinary human beings like them — the "men and women from nowhere" who the rulers cannot even see — simply refused to accept a future without dignity or hope, refused to settle for less than they dreamed of. They marched onto the stage of history and changed its course, becoming different human beings themselves in the process. ...

The three young Chinese Cubans, of similar age, grew up in different parts of Cuba, under different class and social conditions. With each following his own path, all three came to the same revolutionary course of action. They threw themselves into the great proletarian battle that defined their generation — the struggle to overthrow the Batista tyranny and defend Cuba's sovereignty and independence against the onslaught of the imperialist empire to the north.

The significance and historical weight of Chinese immigration to Cuba starting in the mid-nineteenth century emerges from their accounts. In proportion to population, this immi-

gration to Cuba was greater than anywhere else in the Americas, the United States included. In fact, thousands of Chinese laborers brought to build railroads in the US West later emigrated to Cuba in hopes of finding better conditions of life and work.

The lucrative trafficking in tens upon tens of thousands of Chinese peasants — their impressment, their death-ship transport to Cuba, their indentured labor on sugar plantations supplementing the dwindling supply of African slaves, and above all their resistance, struggles, and unblemished record of combat in Cuba's 1868-98 independence wars against Spain — all that is sketched here in broad outlines. It is a story largely unknown outside Cuba.

What is presented here, however, is not history alone. This is one of the indispensable strands of revolutionary Cuba today. From the pre-1959 racist oppression and superexploitation of Chinese as well as black labor, to the measures taken by the popular revolutionary government headed by Fidel Castro to end this discrimination and combat its legacy, to the integration of Cubans of Chinese origin into every level of social and political life today, the story unfolds. As Sío Wong puts it so forcefully, the greatest measure taken against discrimination "was the revolution itself."

"The Chinese community here in

Cuba is different from Peru, Brazil, Argentina, or Canada," he emphasizes. "And that difference is the triumph of a socialist revolution."

The revolutionary overthrow of the Batista dictatorship on January 1, 1959, was not the end of a story. It was the beginning. After taking power, the working people of Cuba began building a new society that posed an intolerable "affront" to the prerogatives of capital. For more than half a century they have defended that society built on new foundations, holding at bay the strongest imperialist power that will ever stalk the globe. In doing so the Cuban toilers and their government have become a beacon, and an ally, to those the world over seeking to learn how to fight to transform their lives — and how to fight to win.

Among the many responsibilities Choy, Chui, and Sío Wong have each shouldered over the years — within the Revolutionary Armed Forces as well as in government assignments and in the leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba — participation in Cuba's internationalist missions abroad stands out.

"Because our system is socialist in character and commitment," Choy explains, revolutionaries in Cuba have always sought to act "in the interests of the majority of humanity inhabiting planet earth — not on behalf of narrow individual interests, or even simply Cuba's national interests."

Each served in Angola at various times between 1975 and 1988, as Cuba responded to the request of the Angolan government, just gaining independence from Portugal, for aid to defeat an imperialist-backed invasion by the armed forces of South Africa's apartheid regime.

Chui helped establish Cuba's internationalist military aid missions in Nicaragua, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Choy served as ambassador to Cape Verde from 1986 to 1992. Sío Wong in 2003 helped Venezuela's toilers in their efforts to establish and extend small-scale urban agriculture. From 1992 to 2010 he served as president of the Cuba-China Friendship Association. ...

As each of the three generals makes clear, the future will be written not for the working people of Cuba, but by them.

April

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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# Support for strike battles is crucial!

*Statement by Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York mayor, March 31.*

There are a number of important strikes and organizing drives today that deserve widespread support from workers and our unions. Join in bringing solidarity to striking Steelworkers at ATI plants in five states and locked-out Marathon oil refinery workers in St. Paul Park, Minnesota! Help get out the truth about their struggles, send messages of support and organize to go with your co-workers, fellow unionists, family and friends to visit their picket lines.

Invite these fighting workers to speak to your union, church or co-workers.

Safety on the job and for those living near the oil refinery is the heart of the fight by Teamster members at Marathon. “I told him do not back down,” Megan Christner said about her husband, Jason, one of the locked-out workers, when she joined the picket line. “You’ve got to stand up for what you believe.”

The Steelworkers at ATI are fighting to prevent the bosses from deepening divisions among the workers, with more and more “tiers” with separate wages and benefits. And they’re fighting against union busting, as ATI demands to bring more contract workers in to replace union members. At the same time, the company

is shuttering union mills as they plough money into nonunion plants elsewhere.

The struggles at Marathon and ATI can’t be left to be isolated and blacked out by the bosses and their friends in the big-business press. For decades our union officials have told us to rely on Democratic Party politicians and they’ll “take care” of us. And they’ve done as little as possible to make strike struggles better known and to strengthen them. We say our unions should do everything they can to supplement the fighting capacity of the workers themselves.

Our power lies in our numbers and the fact that it is our labor that produces all wealth. When we fight together as a class against the class that exploits us we can make gains, gain support and win.

“You pick a fight with one of us, you pick a fight with all of us!” United Auto Workers Local 722 says in its solidarity message to Marathon workers. That must be the watchword of all labor.

Through joining all working-class struggles that unfold we will advance our self-confidence and class consciousness. This will enable us to build our own party, a labor party, to lead our class and all those exploited and oppressed by capital in our millions to take political power into our own hands.

Solidarity with the fights at ATI and Marathon!

## Mass protests in Myanmar face deadly assaults

**Continued from front page**

since the coup, bringing the total deaths to over 500.

In a sign of the regime’s international isolation, only the Russian government sent a ministerial level delegation to the ceremony. Not even Beijing, Myanmar’s main trading partner and chief supplier of its military, sent a ranking official.

Cops and elite army units known for their brutality have opened fire on funerals for those killed by the regime, shot into hospitals and homes, killed youth on the street and chased and shot farmers who oppose the junta. At least 11 of those killed March 27 were children under 16.

**Determination to defeat coup**

The repression has increased the determination among working people to find a way to bring down the junta. Some workers and youth have been building more fortified barricades and some have even begun producing makeshift weapons, but those are no match for the regime’s firepower.

Soldiers fired rocket propelled grenades to destroy barricades thrown up in South Dagon Township, just north of Yangon, March 29. In Yangon’s Tamwe Township, “junta forces told people they will burn down their neighborhoods” if residents don’t stop nightly protests where they bang pots and pans, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners reported.

The regime is also stepping up the pressure on strikers. Many of the hundreds of workers on strike at army-owned factories in five different towns that make parts for military vehicles have returned to work, but some organized slowdowns on the job or have quit.

On March 27 air force fighter jets attacked Day Pu Noe, a village in the southeastern region controlled by the Karen National Union, one of 18 armed forces tied to Myanmar’s ethnic minorities. These groups had been in negotiations with the government about extending cease-fires in place prior to the coup. Earlier in the day the Karen group overran an army base, killing 10 soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel.

Myanmar was under direct military rule from 1962 until 2011. As part of opening the country to foreign capital, the generals imposed a new constitution in 2008, leading to the first elections in decades. Starting in 2011, the military-dominated government passed labor laws that made it possible for trade unions to get legal recognition for the first time in decades. It also raised the minimum wage.

But to the generals’ surprise and chagrin, the National League for Democracy, a bourgeois opposition party led by Aung San Suu Kyi, swept the elections in 2015 and won by even bigger margins in 2020. As head of the government Suu Kyi — who had spent

years under house arrest for her opposition to military rule — eliminated some undemocratic laws, but maintained others that date back to British colonial rule.

**Myanmar’s trade union movement**

“In many ways we are a very young trade union movement,” Khaing Zar Aung, president of the Industrial Workers Federation of Myanmar, told the *Militant* by phone March 29 from Germany, where she was when the coup took place. “Our union had grown to 24,000 members by 2019 in some 90 factories, mostly garment but also shoe, leather and household goods factories. But the membership of the unions overall has never been more than 0.5% of the workforce.”

Nothing changed for the unions with the election of Suu Kyi, Khaing Zar Aung said. “We still faced a lot of union busting. When we have a labor dispute, the law does not protect the union and its members.” After the coup many factory bosses turned over the names of union activists and leaders to the junta. Many union leaders have had to go into hiding, she said.

On March 14, 32 garment factories in Yangon’s industrial district were damaged in arson attacks. The junta used that as a pretext to step up repression in the surrounding working-class neighborhoods.

“Some 150,000 of the more than 600,000 garment workers have gone back to their home villages in rural areas as a result of the factory closings and the shootings every day by the military,” said Khaing Zar Aung. “But people will fight back wherever they are. I am confident they will stay united.”

**Landless peasants**

Some 70% of Myanmar’s people still live in the countryside where most homes don’t have electricity, cooking gas or indoor toilets. In 2012 the military-led government passed the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Act, which it used to aid foreign and local capitalists in evicting hundreds of thousands of farmers from land they had worked for generations.

The National League for Democracy promised prior to the 2015 election that it would return “illegally lost land.” But once in power it made the law stricter in 2018, adding a penalty of two-year prison sentences to anyone living on “vacant, fallow, and virgin land” without a permit. Getting a permit became a nightmare for millions of farmers, especially those from ethnic minorities whose first language isn’t Burmese.

The divisions among the 135 ethnic minorities and the Bamar majority are largely a legacy of the divide-and-rule strategy of the British rulers when Myanmar, then known as Burma, was a British colony. The rank and file soldiers of the army are mostly from the Bamar ethnic majority in rural areas.

## ‘Support amnesty’

**Continued from front page**

vidual adults, mainly men from Mexico. Single adults were 82% of those apprehended by U.S. border forces so far this year.

They’re driven by the need for jobs in the face of pandemic lockdowns, as well as economic and social crises at home. While hiring is increasing in the U.S., 2.4 million workers lost their jobs last year in Mexico.

The Biden administration has kept in place former President Trump’s COVID-19-motivated order to immediately expel individuals crossing the border from Mexico, depriving them of a court hearing and a chance to apply for asylum. Some 20,000 Border Patrol cops, the vast majority deployed along the U.S. southwest border, are implementing this policy.

Many of the individuals expelled back to Mexico wait there and try again. The percentage of migrants stopped at the border who previously had been caught has grown to nearly 40% in the past six months.

Mexican workers face an economic crisis deeper than in the U.S., where jobs are on the upswing, spurred by increased COVID-19 vaccinations. Over a third of the U.S. population has gotten a shot. In Mexico only 5% has.

The White House, however, did reverse the Trump administration’s policy of turning away unaccompanied children at the border. As of March 25 over 18,000 children have been taken into custody by federal authorities. Still, this is a smaller number than the adults who’ve been expelled or barred from the U.S.

The children are detained in overcrowded facilities, which the Biden administration had refused to allow journalists to visit. One of these, a 160,000-square-foot tent area in Donna, Texas, houses 1,000 children. “Lawyers who inspect immigrant detention facilities,” said the *Dallas Morning News* March 15, “interviewed children who reported being held in packed conditions in the tent, with some sleeping on the floor and others unable to shower for five days.”

The Biden administration has been setting up additional detention centers. In Texas this includes in Carrizo Springs, in the oil fields near Odessa, the Dallas Convention Center, and military bases in San Antonio and El Paso. The administration has called on other government agencies to send volunteers to help.

While expelling individuals, mainly men, the Biden administration has also sought to bar families, predominantly from Central America. “There is no change in policy: the border remains closed,” the Department of Homeland Security says.

But because of opposition from the Mexican government, some are being allowed to stay in the U.S. temporarily for hearings on asylum pleas.

**Harris assigned to ‘deal’ with crisis**

The White House assigned Vice President Kamala Harris to deal with this crisis, saying she will oversee administration plans to reduce migration from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Biden is requesting Congress allocate \$4 billion to make the deals.

But this crisis can’t be resolved by throwing money at capitalist regimes there. Conditions facing working people in Central America are rooted in the workings of the U.S. capitalist rulers’ drive for profits, which pushes down wages and working conditions in the factories and fields across the region.

The capitalist class in the U.S. is not interested in permanently shutting its borders. Many bosses are dependent on drawing immigrant workers into the workforce to superexploit them, driving down the wages of all workers and weakening unions. The bosses’ government — whether Democrat or Republican — manages the flow of immigrant labor, both legal and not, depending on the ups and downs of production.

Over the past six years the number of H-2A “guest” visas for farmworkers has been rising. It remained below 100,000 until 2014, doubled to over 200,000 in 2017, and has continued to increase. These workers, who are in the U.S. an average of six months, guarantee a supply of cheap labor for big capitalist farmers.

“The Socialist Workers Party campaign fights for amnesty for all 11 million undocumented immigrants who live and work in the U.S., and against deportations,” said Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dallas City Council. “This is central to uniting the working class, to strengthening our unions and organizing to fight together against the attacks of the bosses and their government.”